

Interspill 2025 Extended Abstract

Title: CNOOC International's Exercise Mù Lóng

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As part of complying with UK regulatory framework, Tier 3 exercises are mandatory for all Operators in the United Kingdom Continental Shelf (UKCS) oil and gas sector. A Tier 3 exercise is undertaken every three years by each UKCS Operator, and they are evaluated by OPRED to ensure the requirements of the OPRC Regulations and corresponding OPEP Guidance Notes are demonstrated. Tier 3 exercises are designed to test reporting, communication interfaces, oil spill response arrangements and response capabilities.

This paper will focus on CNOOC International's spill simulation for Exercise Mù Lóng, which ran for three days in April 2024. OPRED evaluated the first day of the exercise, whereby CNOOC International mobilised a full-scale Incident Management Team (IMT), Environmental Unit (EU) and Business Support Team (BST) to manage a response to the simulated UKCS incident from their Aberdeen office. These teams effectively liaised with the key regulatory agencies participating in the exercise, which included OPRED, the SOSREP's Operations Control Unit (OCU), the MCA's Marine Response Centre (MRC) and the Marine Directorate who chaired the Environment Group (EG).

A full 'cone of response' was simulated during the exercise, with Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) supporting the response from sky to shoreline. OSRL's Incident Hub was used during the exercise and was a central element that enhanced situational awareness. It provided a visual overview of the response activities being implemented by CNOOC International's IMT / EU and the corresponding deployments that OSRL had both actively mobilised and simulated for the exercise.

The second day of the exercise focused on a shoreline response on the Moray coast, whereby CNOOC International's EU continued engagement with the key regulatory agencies, which also included the relevant Local Authority and Local Resilience Partnership (LRP). In field deployments were conducted to feed in 'real time' data to establish more realistic timescales to receiving information and equipment setup. This included the mobilisation of the UKCS Aerial Surveillance Aircraft which flew offshore and along the Aberdeenshire and Moray coastlines. Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique (SCAT) survey teams and an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) team were also deployed off the Moray coast, which provided a great opportunity for CNOOC International to exercise its shoreline response plan. The exercise included an emphasis on wildlife response considerations, whereby CNOOC International consulted with the Sea Alarm Foundation (SAF), the Global Oiled Wildlife Response Service (GOWRS) and the Marine Directorate.

The third day of the exercise was held at Peterhead Marina in Aberdeenshire, where OSRL and ASCO provided practical demonstrations on the operational elements of a shoreline response to approximately 120 attendees. The day concluded with most attendees participating in a successful beach clean organised by CNOOC International and the East Grampian Coastal Partnership, which emphasised the importance of having an organised people management system in place for a shoreline response.

Exercise Mù Lóng demonstrated a robust test of preparedness and reinforced the importance of collaboration to implement an effective response to minimise environmental impacts from oil spills. This paper seeks to expand on the benefits of running large scale exercises and identify lessons learned that can be incorporated into future exercises and preparedness plans.